

AN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SOLIGA TRIBE IN CHAMARAJANAGARA DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

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Abstract:

The present study aims to analyze the economic empowerment of Soliga tribe community in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka state. Soliga tribe in a tribal society plays crucial role in their social, economic, cultural, and religious ways of life and is considered an economic empowerment or asset in their society. Soliga tribe is one of the few remaining forest-dwelling tribal communities in and around the forests in southern India. They live in settlements in and around the forests of BR Hills, MM Hills, and Bandipur in Karnataka and in Satyamangalam forests in Tamil Nadu. The forests of BR Hills have had people for time immemorial. Burial sites excavated from several areas nearby date back to 3,000 years ago to the Megalithic period. These sites characteristically consist of Dolmens, a circular arrangement of large stones with a central pit, walled off by granite slabs. Although it is not known if these belong to the ancestors of the present Soliga tribe, having lived here for generations, the Soliga people have an intricate understanding of the flora and fauna. Soliga tribes main source of income is harvesting and sale of non-timber forest produce like honey, Nellikai (gooseberry, *Emblica officinalis*), Bamboo, Paasi (Lichen), algae, wild turmeric, Indian blackberry, soapnut, and nennari (wild root). They also make baskets using bamboo. The present study focused on influencing factors on the socio-economic empowerment of the Soliga tribal community; analyzed the limitations of economic empowerment of the Soliga tribal Community; and recommend suitable programmes and policy measures to empower tribal communities.

Key words: Origin, Soliga Tribal, Activities, Empowerment, and Socio-economic Empowerment Factors.

Introduction

Scheduled tribes (STs), habitually known as Indigenous people, adivasis, aboriginals, Janjati tribes or tribals. The tribal population is 8.6% of India's total population. Tribal society falls far behind in terms of education, improving its members' social and economic standing and including them into local development. India has a long and illustrious history, but a sizable portion of the population has yet to benefit from it. They still exist as primitive tribes in remote locations and societies. The government has made efforts to develop them because they are socially and economically under-developed. Today, the governments in all countries are paying special consideration for development of the tribes. Though our national leaders and constitutional makers are committed to uplift the tribal people, a desired level of development has not been achieved yet.

Soliga tribal community has one of the few remaining forest-dwelling tribal communities in and around the forests in southern India. They live in settlements in and around the forests of B.R. Hills, M.M. Hills, and Bandipur in Karnataka. The forests of B.R. Hills have had people for time immemorial. Burial sites excavated from several areas nearby date back to 3,000 years ago to the Megalithic period. These sites characteristically consist of Dolmens, a circular arrangement of large stones with a central pit, walled off by granite slabs. Although it is not known if these belong to the ancestors of the present Soliga tribe, having lived here for generations, the Soliga people have an intricate understanding of the flora and fauna.

Dimensions of Empowerment

Social Empowerment

Create an enabling environment through adopting various policies and programmes for development of women, also providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services, so as to enable them to realize their full potential.

Economic Empowerment

Ensure provision of training, employment and income generation activities with both forward and backward linkages with the ultimate objective of making all women economically independent and self-reliant. Gender justice eradicate all forms of gender discrimination and thus enable women to enjoy not only de jure (Any position, power, or possession authorized by law) but also de facto (Practice the exist in reality, whether or not they are officially recognized by laws) rights and fundamental freedom on par with men in all spheres, viz, political, economic, social, civil, cultural etc.

Objectives of the study

The present study has mainly three objectives, they are:

1. To study the historical background of Soliga tribal community in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka state.
2. To know the various activities and status of Soliga tribal community in Karnataka state.
3. To study the influencing factors on economic empowerment of Soliga tribal Community in the study area.

Hypothesis of the Study

1. There is a positive improvement in the socio-economic empowerment status of the Soliga tribal community in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka.

Research Methodology of the Study

The present study is mainly based on both primary and secondary sources of data. For collecting primary data mainly used the interview scheduled and observation methods. The primary data were collected from 85 households who are living in the village and forest area in Yarkanagadde Podu, Purani Podu and K. Devaralli of Yelandur taluk of Chamarajanagara district. This tribal settlement is located in Biligirirangana Hills (B. R. Hills). The primary data was collected about agriculture, animal husbandry, collection of minor forest products, health and education, assets, employment, wage, gender discrimination, decision-making, and economic organization of the Soliga community. Secondary data was collected from various published and unpublished thesis, books, reports, journals, and websites.

Origin of Soliga Tribal Community in Karnataka: A Brief View

The Soliga tribes trace their origin to Karayya, son of Lord Maleya Mahadeshwara, Swamy of Maleya Mahadeshwara Hills, Karnataka. Legend says that on seeing Karayya's affinity towards wild animals, Lord Maleya Mahadeshwara Swamy asked Karayya to reside in forests, whereas the other son Biliyayya resided in plains and became the forefather of Lingayats. Soliga, also spelled Solega, Sholaga, and Shōlaga, is an ethnic group in India. Its members inhabit the mountain ranges mostly in the Chamarajanagar district of southern Karnataka and Erode district of Tamil Nadu. Many are concentrated in the Biligiriranga Hills and associated ranges, mainly in the talukas Yelandur, Kollegal, and Chamarajanagar of Karnataka. The Soliga speak Sholaga, which belongs to the Dravidian family. Under Indian law, they are recognized as a scheduled tribe, they have a population of around 40,000 (*Singh, Nagendra Kr, 2006*).

Status of Soliga Tribal Community in Karnataka

Soligas tribal community has mainly practiced subsistence agriculture activities for their nourishment. The indigenous cropping systems, animal rearing, and other agricultural activities are in tune with the rituals of the tribes. These are also known for their rich knowledge of soil fertility and eco-friendly agricultural practices (*Buchanan, Francis, 1870*). Soligas tribal communities have

various activity statuses in their living areas namely languages, occupations, social, religion, festivals, food systems, and agriculture practices following are given here.

Language

The Soliga speak the Sholaga language (Soliganudi) as a mother tongue. A member of the Dravidian family, it is most closely related to Kannada with several Tamil influences.

Occupation and Social

The Soliga used to practice shifting cultivation, but have more or less given up this practice now. They grow Ragi (Finger millet, Eleusine coracana) for subsistence. Their main source of income is harvesting and sale of Non-timber Forest Produce (NTFP) like honey, nellikai (gooseberry, *Embilica officinalis*), bamboo, Paasi (Lichen), algae, wild turmeric, Indian blackberry, soapnut and nennari (wild root). They also make baskets using bamboo. They are increasingly being brought to the 'mainstream' with active Government and NGO initiative. Many have been given lands closer to 'civilised areas' and most of the forest-dwelling population have been brought together into clusters called Podus. Most of the forest area they stay comes under wild life protection area. The Biligiriranga Hills is a Wildlife Sanctuary under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, the Male Mahadeswara Hills is a Reserve Forest, and Bandipur is a National Park. Their rights on harvesting NTFP is being sought to be withdrawn citing conservation concerns, sparking a debate about the rights of indigenous people. The Soligas later won a court case to stay on their land.

Religion

Soliga people follow naturism and animism along with following Hindu practices and their main deities are Madeshwara, Rangaswamy of Biligirirangana Hills (who is considered the brother-in-law of the clan), Karayya, Kyate Devaru and Jadeswamy, her deities worshipped by them include Madeshwara, Basaveshwara and Nanjundeshwara and Sri Alamelu Ranganayaki smetha Sri hanuma.

Festivals

They celebrate important traditional festivals like Rotti habba, Hosa Ragi habba and other agricultural rituals. They also celebrate festivals like Mari habba, Gowri habba, Sankranthi habba, Yugadi habba.

Food System

In the hot dry summers, the Soligas use leaves and fruits like; mango, jackfruit, amla, bel and tamarind. Except rice, another staple food of Soligas which they grow, the forests give them everything else.

Settled Agriculture

Soligas were helped to adopt settled agriculture which they were not following traditionally. Every effort was made to preserve their traditional knowledge. Since time immemorial, Soligas were practicing shifting cultivation. The Soligas seldom plough the land and they do not use chemical fertilizers or other chemical pest and diseases control measures. They have been practicing what the modern man refers to as organic and natural farming practices.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents in Chamarajanagara District

The socio-economic profile of the respondents is given with the simple parameters like age, education status, marital status, types of family, caste structure, family size, occupation of the family, and socio-economic empowerment of Soliga tribal community through Government programmes. In this given below Table-1 depicts that the socio-economic profile of the respondents in Chamarajanagara District.

Table- 1: Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents in Chamarajanagara District

Category	Variables	No. of Respondents	% of Total	Result
Age	Below 25	11	12.94	χ^2 Value = 8.129

	26 – 35	24	28.24	$df = 3$ $Sig. = .043$
	36 – 45	29	34.12	
	46 and above	21	24.71	
Education	Illiterate	46	54.12	χ^2 Value = 2.353 $df = 4$ $Sig. = .039$
	Literate	21	24.71	
	5 Class passed	11	12.94	
	7 th Class Passed	5	5.88	
	10 th Class Passed	2	2.35	
Marital Status	Married	52	61.18	χ^2 Value = 4.247 $df = 1$ $Sig. = .039$
	Unmarried	33	38.82	
Family types	Nuclear Family	29	34.12	χ^2 Value = 1.153 $df = 2$ $Sig. = .562$
	Joint family	24	28.24	
	Extended family	32	37.65	
Occupation	Agriculture and allied sector	22	25.88	χ^2 Value = 6.094 $df = 2$ $Sig. = .047$
	Agricultural labour	24	28.24	
	Minor forest produce collection	39	45.88	

Source: Field Study

Age Group of Respondent

The above table shows the age-wise distribution of the respondents in the Chamarajanagara district. Out of 85 respondents, 29 (34.12%) respondents belong to the 36 to 45 age group, 24 (28.24%) respondents belong to the 26 to 35 age group and the rest 11 (12.94%) respondents are below the 25 age group. The Pearson Chi-square test value for the obtained data is 8.129 with a ($P < 0.1$) value showing the status of economic empowerment of the Soliga tribal community is significantly influenced by the age structure of the respondents in the study area.

Education

The above table depicts that regarding the educational level of the respondents that 54.12% i.e., 46 of the respondents are illiterate respondents. 24.71% of the respondents are literate people, 11 (12.94%) respondents studied 5th class passed education, 5 (5.88%) respondents studied 7th class passed education, and the remaining only 2 (2.35%) respondents studied 10th class passed. The statistical evidence has proved that the estimated Pearson Chi-Square test value for the obtained data is 2.353 and its probability value is 0.039 which is less than a 1% level of significance in the 4 degrees of freedom which implies that there is significant economic empowerment of Soliga tribal community by the respondents (Vide Table-1).

Marital Status

From the above Table-1, it is revealed the marital status of the respondents in the study area. Out of 85 samples, the majority of the respondents were married people (61.18%), and the remaining only 33 (38.82%) respondents were unmarried people.

Occupational Status

The above Table-1 shows that occupational status is considered as the main source of income it represents the socio-economic status of the Soliga tribal community in the study area. Out of 85 samples, the majority of the respondents are involved in minor forest produce collection activity (45.88%), 24 (28.24%) respondents are engaged in agricultural labourers in their living areas, and the remaining only 22 (25.88%) respondents are engaged in agriculture and allied activities like goat rearing, sheep rearing, cattle rearing, etc.

Testing Hypothesis

H0: There is no positive improvement in the socio-economic empowerment status of the Soliga tribal community in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka.

H1: There is a positive improvement in the socio-economic empowerment status of the Soliga tribal community in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka.

Table-2: Improvement of Socio-economic Empowerment Status of Soliga Tribal Community in Chamarajanagara District

Sl. No.	Socio-economic Empowerment Factors	No. of Respondents (Out of 85)	Chi-square Value	Df	Sig
1	Upliftment of Economic Conditions in their family	81 (95.29%)	69.753	1	.000
2	Health Improvement	80 (94.12%)	66.176	1	.000
3	Family planning and change the marriage system	79 (92.94%)	62.694	1	.000
4	Ownership of agricultural land	75 (88.24%)	49.706	1	.000
5	Improve Wage employment	82 (96.47%)	73.424	1	.000
6	Changes of Food culture and habits	76 (89.41%)	52.812	1	.000
7	Satisfaction Children Education	83 (97.65%)	77.188	1	.000
8	Improve the social aspects	84 (98.82%)	81.047	1	.000
9	Migration for wage work	79 (92.94%)	62.694	1	.000

Source: Field Survey

The above Table-2 indicates the Chi-square test results of the positive improvement in the socio-economic empowerment status of the Soliga tribal community in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka, as in the table all the variables such as Upliftment of Economic Conditions in their family; Health Improvement, Family planning and change the marriage system; Ownership of agricultural land, Improve Wage employment; Changes of Food culture and habits; Satisfaction Children Education; Improve the social aspects; and Migration for wage work are statistically significant at 1% level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that positive improvement in the socio-economic empowerment status of the Soliga tribal community in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka.

Findings of the Study

- In the field study observed that the age-wise distribution of the respondents in the Chamarajanagara district. Out of 85 respondents, 29 (34.12%) respondents belong to the 36 to 45 age group, 24 (25.24%) respondents belong to the 26 to 35 age group and the rest 11 (12.94%) respondents are below the 25 age group. The Pearson Chi-square test value for the obtained data is 8.129 with a ($P < 0.1$) value showing the status of economic empowerment of the Soliga tribal community is significantly influenced by the age structure of the respondents in the study area.
- The field study found that regarding the educational level of the respondents that 54.12% i.e., 46 of the respondents are illiterate respondents. 24.71% of the respondents are literate people, 11 (12.94%) respondents studied 5th class passed education, 5 (5.88%) respondents studied 7th class passed education, and the remaining only 2 (2.35%) respondents studied 10th class passed. The statistical evidence has proved that the estimated Pearson Chi-Square test value for the obtained

data is 2.353 and its probability value is 0.039 which is less than a 1% level of significance in the 4 degrees of freedom which implies that there is significant economic empowerment of Soliga tribal community by the respondents.

- In the study area revealed that the marital status of the respondents in the study area. Out of 85 samples, the majority of the respondents were married people (61.18%), and the remaining only 33 (38.82%) of the respondents were unmarried people.
- In the field study indicates the occupational status is considered as the main source of income it represents the socio-economic status of the Soliga tribal community in the study area. Out of 85 samples, the majority of the respondents are involved in minor forest produce collection activity (45.88%), 24 (28.24%) respondents are engaged in agricultural labourers in their living areas, and the remaining only 22 (25.88%) respondents are engaged in agriculture and allied activities like goat rearing, sheep rearing, cattle rearing, etc.
- The study area indicates the Chi-square test results of the positive improvement in the socio-economic empowerment status of the Soliga tribal community in the Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka, as in the table all the variables such as Upliftment of Economic Conditions in their family; Health Improvement, Family planning and change the marriage system; Ownership of agricultural land, Improve Wage employment; Changes of Food culture and habits; Satisfaction Children Education; Improve the social aspects; and Migration for wage work are statistically significant at 1% level.

Conclusion

The present study concluded that the Soliga tribal community has one of the few remaining forest-dwelling tribal communities in and around the forests in southern India. They live in settlements in and around the forests of BR Hills, MM Hills, and Bandipur in Karnataka and in Satyamangalam forests in Tamil Nadu. The forests of BR Hills have had people for time immemorial. Burial sites excavated from several areas nearby date back to 3000 years ago to the Megalithic period. These sites characteristically consist of Dolmens, a circular arrangement of large stones with a central pit, walled off by granite slabs. Although it is not known if these belong to the ancestors of the present Soliga tribe, having lived here for generations, the Soliga people have an intricate understanding of the flora and fauna.

Economic empowerment of the Soliga tribal community to a large extent depends on economic and educational attainment. Educated people will be able to face present-day society better than in earlier times. In the present study, no one can remain completely isolated, but they are influenced by the growth of modern society and culture. The government is providing schemes to support Soliga people for health, education, and economic empowerment. It will help to increase the literacy rate, health, and economic status and it will lead to the right way to development. The decision-making and community-level participation are explored to assess their awareness regarding their cultural obstacles and home violence, health, and lack of nutrients. Many times, they suffer from a lack of services at the community level and cultural levels. Thus, increasing the literacy rate and providing opportunities for gainful employment for tribal people will be instrumental in bringing about a change in the status of scheduled tribes in India and to handle challenges fruitfully.

The economic empowerment of tribal communities involves not only the process of creation of socio-political space for these groups by the state and civil society, but also it is a process of liberation from man-made bondage through sustained struggle and resistance. It also represents realization of hopes and dreams of marginalized groups for a social environment, free of inequalities which affect them politically, socially and economically. The issue of economic empowerment is also linked with aspects like equality, liberty and fraternity. Thus the concept of "Economic Empowerment" of Soliga tribal community is quite new and it has been contextualized and acquires a new connotation in recent years among social scientists, policy makers, and development activists. So, to overcome all the obstacles of the economic empowerment of soliga tribal community the scientific research is needed.

The family is the basic element of society, which gives social status, roles, and social responsibilities to every individual. The family is the powerful medium through which a value system can develop over a period of time. The behaviors and attitudes of the individuals are determined by the family that is whether a family is joint or nuclear and it also determines the status and roles of women. As per the research, it is important to discuss and know the economic empowerment profile of the Soliga tribes and their families. Economic empowerment has an important role to play in the holistic development of society.

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